



CSA TODAY

A NEWSLETTER OF THE OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

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Director's Blog

Scott Reiner, Executive Director

As summer draws to a close, it is no understatement to reflect that this has been a summer like no other. The COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on every area of our lives continues. With the opening of schools upon us, there is much uncertainty as to what that will look like for our children ... virtual, hybrid, in-person ... and how much longer until we can return to life B.C.E. (Before COVID Era).



CSA serves many of our community's most vulnerable children and families. The negative consequences of not having physical access to schools and the critical services they provide are not yet fully understood. These consequences are not only instructional, but being "cut off" from emotional, nutritional, physical health, and other supports and present significant challenges to children and their caregivers. The economic strains resulting from the pandemic weigh on families, as well as the CSA provider community, many of whom have "stepped up to the plate" to adapt their service delivery models to the new reality.

The impact of the pandemic, while falling on all of us to varying degrees, is particularly acute in communities of color and higher economic stress. The events of the past few months have brought us to an acute awareness of, and laid bare patterns of inequality and disparity, fueled by a long history of systemic and institutionalized racism in this country. Inequities not only in the criminal justice arena, but also in access to health care, economic and educational opportunity now challenge each of us to re-examine our roles and responses to these realities.

Einstein said "in the midst of every crisis, lies great opportunity." If that is the case (and Einstein was a very smart person), we are now in the greatest period of opportunity we have experienced in a very long time. So the challenge before us is what will we make of this opportunity? Will we respond with empathy, common purpose, a commitment to create a more just, equitable community? What option do we have? I hope we will all dedicate ourselves to being part of the solution, and if we do, there is no limit to what we can achieve.

Thanks for all each of you are doing to be part of the solution.

CANS Update

Applying the “Six Key Principles” to Accurately Rate the CANS
Carol Wilson, OCS Program Consultant



Earlier this year, my colleague Anna Antell and I began a round of “CANS and Service Planning “ trainings which was cut short by the pandemic. We'll resume our training plans when we can all see each other again, but until then I thought I'd share some information on what seems to be a rating stumbling block for some participants in the training events we were able to hold.

The area of confusion concerns the meaning of the “30 day” time frame on many CANS items. As those of you who are raters know, many of the CANS items reference the last 30 days for rating needs or strengths items. Using the time frame of the last 30 days is one of Six Key Principles underlying how the CANS is accurately rated. It appears that at least some raters do not understand this Principle in the intended context and attempt to apply it very literally. But this Key Principle does not stand alone. It must be understood as only one factor when determining a rating and one that may be overridden by other considerations.

How do the “Six Key Principles” affect your decisions when determining how to rate an item on a CANS Assessment? Why are these Principles so important?

The Six Key Principles form the foundation of understanding how to rate the CANS. Although Dr. Lyons explains the Six Key Principles in the online training, it's easy to overlook them when completing an assessment. The assessor may rate an item after looking at the anchor descriptions and evaluating the severity of the need or level of the strength. But those elements must be considered in the context of the Six Key Principles to accurately rate a CANS.

To keep this article to a readable length and to focus on the 30 Days time frame, we'll only discuss three of the Principles here. But please review guidance noted at the end of this article for information on all six. Although this article focuses primarily on rating children and youth, the Six Key Principles are also applied when rating caregivers.

Really Important –Need for Action, “30 Days” and Rating Child, not Child “in Services”

These three Key Principles are likely the most misunderstood when rating a CANS as they interplay with one another when influencing a rating decision. One Principle is that items are rated not only on the level of severity of the need, or significance of the strength, but how quickly action must be taken to meet that need or develop/use that strength. The need for action or intervention overrides the level of severity when selecting a rating. For example, if you are debating whether or not a rating should be a “1” or a “2” on a need, think about what the response will, or should be, in addressing this need. If you know the need must be addressed, but not urgently, rate the item a “2.” If no action other than “watchful waiting” will be taken, rate a “1.” If you know the need must be addressed quickly, rate a “3”.

Another Principle is that the child or youth is being rated, not the child or youth (or caregiver) “in services.” If services are in place, those interventions or supports may be “masking” needs. For example, in a residential treatment facility a child's behavior may stabilize because of the structured nature of the setting. But what you as the assessor must consider is how would that child behave and what would his needs likely be if those services were not in place. If the child were to return home today, how would you rate this item? This requires some presumption and knowledge of the child's previous behavior on the part of the rater.

Lastly, the “30 Days” Principle, referenced on many items, instructs assessors to consider the child or caregiver's behavior or needs/strengths during the past 30 days. But this can be a tricky trap if the previous two Principles are not a part of the final decision. When rating, you must remember that 1) the level must take into consideration the need for action and 2) the services the child (or family) have received in those past 30 days which may be masking the need. Often the need for action (services, interventions or supports), or continued action, will outweigh the child's behavior in the last 30 days when making a rating decision. Next, ***continue to the next page*** to take a look at this principle in practice .

CANS Update - Continued

The easiest example of this combining of the Principles is to consider a child in a residential treatment program whose behavior has stabilized over the past 30 days after placement. One interpretation of the “30 Days” rule would mean that if the child has shown improvement in primary areas of need, such as a decrease in angry outbursts and violence toward others during the last month, the assessor will drop the ratings to “1” on these items. But ratings of “1” no longer provide support for the restrictive level of intervention of a residential program. Ratings of “1” mean the needs have been addressed and the child can return home. Is that an accurate reflection of the child’s needs or are you really rating how well the child is doing “in services”?

In considering this child’s ratings, the assessor must think about not simply the last 30 days but how this child would likely behave if placed back in the community today, without the support of the treatment program. Is his behavior simply being modified by the treatment setting (child “in services”)? Is continued action or intervention necessary to make that determination? If yes, the need for action (e.g. placement) outweighs the 30 day timeframe.

So...if the 30 Days Principle can be overridden by other considerations, why even include that Principle? Dr. Lyons explains that the purpose is to have everyone professionals, parents and youth... focus on what is happening now, not for example, the sexual abuse six years ago that precipitated the child’s entry into foster care and what the circumstances of the caregiver were at that time. No one can go back and change what happened in the past.

What can be addressed is how that child (or caregiver) is functioning now. So the 30 days perspective is intended not to create an arbitrary time frame but to remind the case manager, the Family Assessment and Planning Team, including service providers and family of the importance of focusing on and addressing the youth’s and family’s needs in the here and now.

For more information, please see “Guidance on Rating the Child and Adolescent Strengths and Needs Assessment” on the OCS website (csa.virginia.gov/CANS) as well as resource materials on the CANVaS (“Documents” folder) and www.tcomtraining.com (“Supplemental Materials”) websites.

Family Engagement

Anna Antell, OCS Program Consultant



Meaningful family engagement is a central value of CSA and Systems of Care work. In the CSA system, family engagement should occur at the program and service (FAPT) level as well as at the policy (CPMT) level.

Virginia Heals (<http://virginiaheals.com/>) has developed a Family Engagement Guide and E-Learning that communities may find useful as teams seek to deepen the involvement of youth and families in policy, program, and service decision-making processes.



[Follow the 2020 CSA Conference on Facebook](#)



As previously announced, the 9th Annual Commonwealth of Virginia CSA Conference will be a virtual event. The event will still take place on October 29-30, 2020. There is no charge to attend this year's conference! Please join us for the same incredible CSA Conference programming, just in a different, health-focused format. This shift also allows us to explore new and innovative ways for our incredible sponsors to participate.

Registration for attendees and vendors opens on September 9th. Visit the conference website at www.cpe.vt.edu/ocs/ for registration and additional details.



Just a Reminder...

The CSA Coordinators Pre-Conference Session will be held on October 23rd from 8:30 - 11:30 AM.

All CSA Coordinators are invited to an engaging session that will explore the topic of "Leading from the Middle". This session is for CSA Coordinators only. Invitations and registration information have been sent to expected participants.

Stepanie Bacote, Program Audit Manager

Audit Corner

The Audit Corner highlights important, relevant information and tips to improve organizational governance, risk management, and control activities. Such serious topics do not usually lend themselves to humor.

Well.... it is time for auditors take a stand and lighten the mood.

With the continued escalation of environmental, political, racial, and social activism circulating in the modern 24-hour news cycle that seems to permeate all factions of our daily lives, we could all use a little laughter to lighten the mood. Therefore, this edition of The Audit Corner will not feature a discussion about governance, controls, risks, or even fraud. Instead, this space will be devoted to highlighting the benefits of laughter. After all, laughter is the best medicine.



(STANLEY HUDSON, CHARACTER ON THE NBC TELEVISION SHOW "THE OFFICE")

According to a November 2019 article published on HelpGuide.Org titled "Laughter is the Best Medicine", laughter is good for both your physical and mental health. It brings people together and strengthens relationships. The authors also wrote, "Laughter is an especially powerful tool for managing conflict and reducing tension when emotions are running high. Whether with romantic partners, friends and family, or co-workers, you can learn to use humor to smooth over disagreements, lower everyone's stress level, and communicate in a way that builds up your relationships rather than breaking them down." The table below depicts how the article's authors characterized the benefits of laughter and humor.

THE BENEFITS OF LAUGHTER AND HUMOR		
Physical Health	Mental Health	Social Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boosts immunity • Lowers stress hormones • Decreases pain • Relaxes your muscles • Prevents heart disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds joy and zest to life • Eases anxiety • Relieve stress • Improves mood • Strengthens resilience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthens relationships • Attracts others to us • Enhances teamwork • Helps diffuse conflict • Promotes group bonding

SOURCE: [HTTPS://WWW.HELPGUIDE.ORG/ARTICLES/MENTAL-HEALTH/LAUGHTER-IS-THE-BEST-MEDICINE.HTM](https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/laughter-is-the-best-medicine.htm)

Considering the nature of the Children's Services Act (CSA), among the beneficiaries of laughter and humor are the children, families, professional and community partners that join forces with the Community Policy and Management Teams and Family Assessment and Planning Teams to create a collaborative, child-centered, family-focused, community-based system of care that effectively meets the needs of youth and their families in the Commonwealth. No one ever said the work that we do at the state and/or local level to implement and ensure the effectiveness of the CSA program would be easy. However, lightening the mood with a little laughter occasionally will certainly make us all believe it is possible. I will start...

Joke of the Day

Q: Why did the can crusher quit his job?
A: Because it was soda pressing.

Q: Can February march?
A: No, but April may.

SOURCE: [HTTP://WWW.LAUGHFACTORY.COM/JOKES/CLEAN-JOKES](http://www.laughfactory.com/jokes/clean-jokes)

References: Laughter is the Best Medicine, Authors: Lawrence Robinson, Melinda Smith, M.A., and Jeanne Segal, Ph.D. Last updated: November 2019 <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/laughter-is-the-best-medicine.htm>
Joke of the Day, <http://www.laughfactory.com/jokes/clean-jokes>



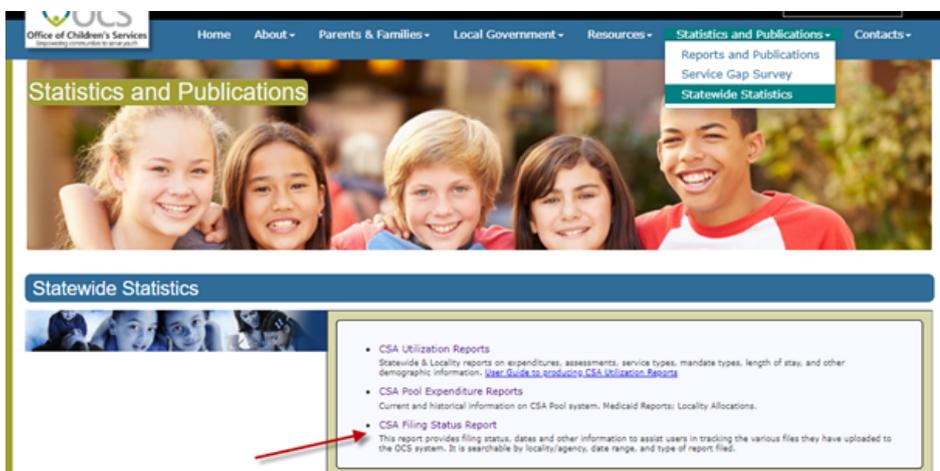
Finance & Information System Updates

Maris Adcock, Business & Finance Manager
Preetha Agrawal, Information Technology Director

CSA Filing Status Reports

During this time of the year (prior to September 30th), it is helpful to produce and review local CSA Filing Status Reports. To access these reports, look under *Statistics and Publications*, select Statewide Statistics, then CSA Filing Status Report on the OCS website.

This report provides filing status, dates and other information to assist users in tracking the various files they have uploaded to the OCS system. It is searchable by locality/agency, date range, and type of report filed.



For the most recent filing status; select your locality from the Locality dropdown, click “Yes” on most recent submission and click on the Submit button.

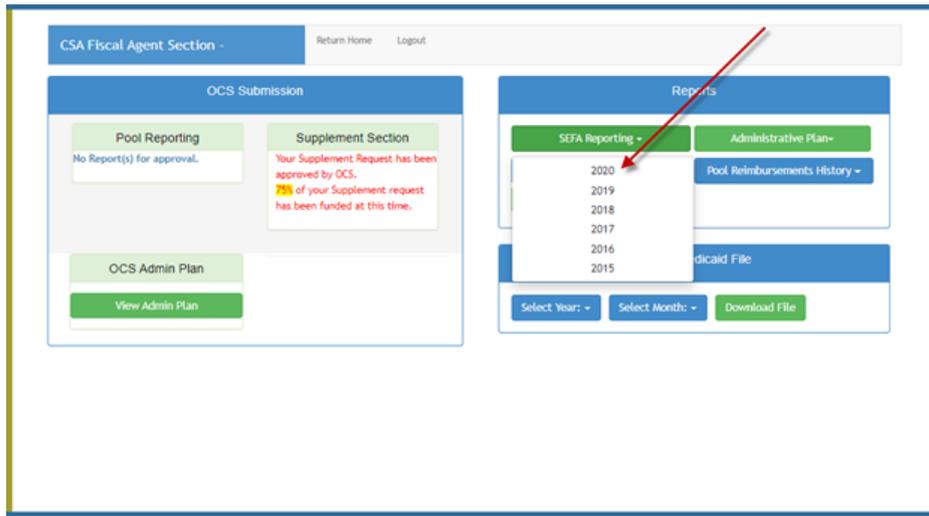
To Search by File Type or date range; select your locality from the Locality dropdown, click “No” on most recent submission and click on the Submit button.

Finance & Information System Updates

SEFA Reports

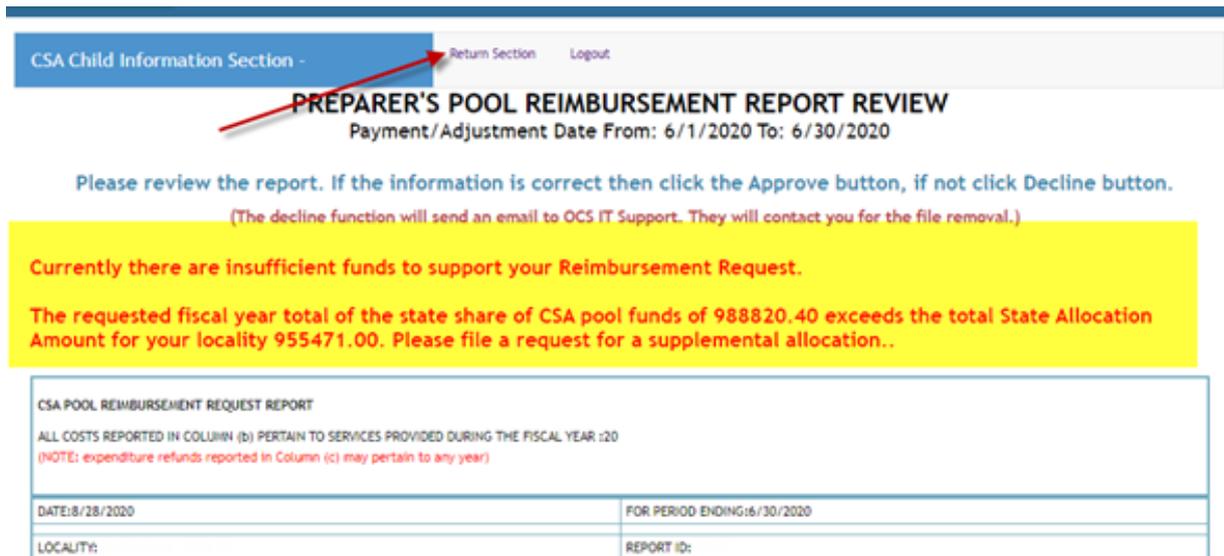
These reports are now available for all localities after the CSA Coordinator, Fiscal Agent or CPMT Chair sign-in to Local Government Report application and go to their respective modules.

Under SEFA Reporting button, click on the Fiscal Year to display the report. Going forward this report will be available automatically generated on August 1.



Insufficient Funds Error

While approving the Pool Reimbursement Report, if the Report Preparer sees the Insufficient Funds error in red on the top of the screen, please click on **Return Section** to either file a new Supplement Request by clicking the Add Supplement Button or select Release Supplement to release a previously requested supplement. Please DO NOT request the Pool Reimbursement Report generated to be deleted.



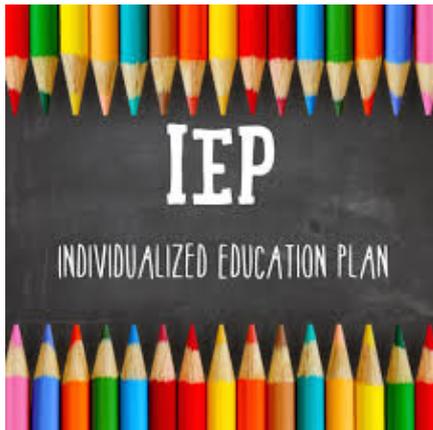
Resource Round Up



VA C.O.P.E.S. is a free warm-line available to all Virginia residents who may be struggling to cope with the effects and circumstances (such as isolation, fear, grief and anxiety) around COVID 19.

Crisis Counselors are available
Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. - 9 p.m.
and on Saturday-Sunday from 5-9 p.m.

Call or text VA C.O.P.E.S at 877-349-6428.
Spanish speaking counselors are also available.



An easy-to-use tip sheet is available for local and state educational agencies and parents interested in holding and participating in virtual individualized education program (IEP) meetings. Funded by U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, the tip sheet is available [here](#). This tip sheet and other resources can be found at ParentCenterHub.org.

**ADD YOUR
PHONE
TO THE
COVID FIGHT**
HELP VIRGINIA STOP COVID-19

Download Virginia's free **COVIDWISE** Exposure Notifications app to help protect your community while protecting your privacy.



TA Question of the Quarter

Does a locality have to obligate or expend its entire amount of Protected funding before requesting supplemental funds?



No. Supplemental reimbursements allow local governments to request additional funds from OCS to meet the sum sufficient requirements for children receiving special education and foster care services. A local government is not required to obligate or expend its Protected funds before requesting supplemental CSA State Pool funding.

Additional information on Protected Funds can be found in ***Administrative Memorandum #20-07-FAQ on CSA Protected Funds***, distributed to all CSA stakeholders on September 1, 2020. As the current fiscal year ends and FY 2021 begins, be sure to see two other Admin Memos and related guidance documents:

- ***Administrative Memorandum #20-06 - Special Education and the Children's Services Act***
- ***Administrative Memorandum #20-08 - Utilization Review Guidelines***



Got Questions?

Get answers by using the OCS Technical Assistance Help Desk. OCS staff receive your questions immediately and will respond quickly, with the goal of same-day responses.

Access CSA staff by using the [OCS Technical Assistance Help Desk](#) on the CSA website or by clicking [here](#).

Guidelines for Newsletter Submission

If you have information you would like to share with your CSA colleagues around the state, please follow the guidelines for submission located [HERE...](#)

